

LIVING IN TERROR POST 9/11 HORROR FILMS

AMANDA MARIE ALVARADO

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Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English.

Living in Terror
Post 9/11 Horror Films

Elaine Roth

Elaine Roth, Ph.D.

Director

MA Committee

Amanda Marie Alvarado

Sharon Zechowski

Sharon Zechowski, Ph.D.

May 13, 2007

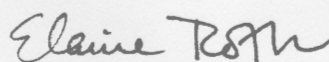
Margaret Scanlon

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
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For my mom.

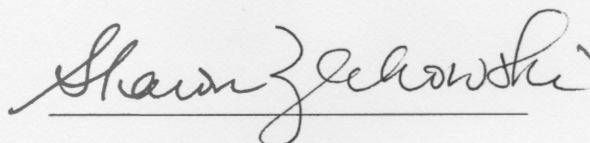
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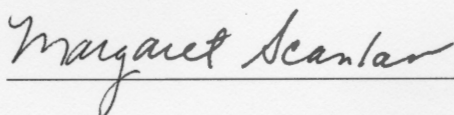
Director

MA Committee



Sharon Zechowski, Ph.D.

May 11, 2007



Margaret Scanlan, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The events of September 11, 2001 have changed the way Americans view terror and terrorism forever. The events of this one day made a type of destruction Americans had only read about previously a reality in our own home. Since then our culture has been one of fear. The media facilitates this terror with constant newscasts of bombings, random shootings, anthrax scares and plans for future terrorist attacks. Our country has been trained to understand a system of codes, which indicate the level of fear we should be experiencing. Thus our society constantly turns to the media to see if the current level is yellow, orange or red, as if we can somehow control or mediate the causes of fear.

One way our society transmits and reflects the current beliefs, values and traditions is through art forms. Art forms, like literature and film, map the changes in our society's ideologies. Therefore, one can allegedly see art responding to the culture and adopting the ideologies of the culture. One of the most significant issues of our day and age is the reality of terrorism. Thus this paper seeks to map the changes our society has encountered through an art form that deals directly with the concept of terror.

Film is a significant art form of the twenty-first century, which gets a great deal of exposure in our society. Theatres in the United States are constantly advertising the newest genre film. Due to its widespread exposure, this art form has a greater ability to reach the masses with narratives that reinforce or question ideology. Films, especially genre films, also have a great deal of loyal followers. Film, thus, is a significant transmitter of culture, especially genre films.

This paper seeks to prove the connection between ideology and film by highlighting the change in ideology after the events of September 11th. The paper will analyze the conservative and progressive nature such an art form poses. It will also

demonstrate how such a medium is confronted with new ideologies, such as the changing culture of fear, and adapts in response to the change. Through the horror genre, one can map society's causes, solutions and preventative measures for the creation of terror in our lives.

Moreover, this paper seeks to claim film as a significant art form. Film functions as an educational and cultural work of art. Films, especially genre films, convey significant messages which keep viewers returning for multiple exposures. Although genre films are considered the least prestigious of all forms of film due to their repetitive, formulaic construction, these films teach us a great deal about our culture and even ourselves. Therefore genre film is not only significant, but a powerful means of revealing our culture.

What is a Genre Film?

In order to understand the importance of genre film one must understand what composes a genre. Genre films, as defined by Thomas Schatz in Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System, are films that "involve one-dimensional characters acting predictable story systems" (6). Essentially these films share certain characteristics, which over time provide expectations for the genre. Due to their repetitive nature, many scholars do not see genre films as a worthy category of study. However, it is the repetitive nature of these films that makes the analysis of these films so very important. Why do we seek repetition?

Fans of genre films go to see these films because they seek the repetition of the common storyline. Someone familiar with a genre understands the rules which the film follows. If a film deviates from these rules then it essentially writes itself outside the genre and may even lose the audience, who were expecting a genre film. It is as if the

genre film becomes a type of video therapy. Viewers go to a certain genre film because the same issues – finding true love, the exploitation of the underdog, fear of our disintegrating environment and the destruction of the classic family – are being confronted in the narrative. The exposures to narratives which confront these problems allow viewers to work through these issues in their own lives.

A Progressive Genre Film

While stressing the importance of genre film, it is also crucial to point out the progressive capacity for genre film. It seems unlikely that these types of films could be labeled as progressive when the definition limits genre films to a set of rules. Although this seems like a failing point for genre film, it can actually serve as their greatest strength. Viewers know the characteristics of these films. Quite quickly an audience can identify the protagonist, antagonist and even understand what the progression of the plot will be, sometimes even before the end of the first act. This knowledge of the genre makes any small deviation noticeable (Roth, L680). Many non-genre films feel as if they must hit the viewer over the head with their message. A genre film only needs to follow most of the genre's characteristics and slightly alter the rendering of a few items to catch the viewer's attention.

While this paper seeks to portray the significance of all genre films, it also plans to highlight the importance of deviating from the genre and still maintaining an audience. One film this paper will look at in detail is M. Night Shyamalan's The Village (2004). While all horror films do a wonderful job of revealing cultural concerns, The Village proves itself as a progressive film due to its outright political nature. The director's greatest strength is the film's employment of the genre's characteristics, while highlighting how these characteristics have an effect on the viewer. The film then makes

greater strides by showing how this creation of fear is reproduced in our own society. This film is very progressive for a time when most horror films are reinforcing terror and the need for terror. The Village reconditions viewers and shows them their own susceptibility to false beliefs when they feel their safety is in danger. In order to appreciate this progressive quality let's look more closely at the horror genre.

The Horror Genre

"Like any other art form, horror cannot and should not be viewed as separate from its social and historical context; it is nothing less than a barometer for measuring an era's cultural anxieties" (Magistrale).

Many horror films are considered "B" movies and not worthy to be labeled as art. However, these popular films are also important transmitters of our culture. These films confront what our society views as deviant and conditions the viewer, through fear, to accept the same ideologies. Studying these films teaches one a great deal about our society's values and prejudices.

The horror genre confronts fear. This fear may be embodied in a monster or an evil spirit, but the genre's main goal is to deal with fear and our society's preoccupations. We use terror to confront situations we cannot understand or control. Through the use of the genre's characteristics – low key lighting, the use of weapons, a monster, a clear delineation of good and bad, violence and gore – these films attempt to solve the problems within the film.

As a genre of order, these films attempt to rid the narrative of its confusion by reinforcing current ideology (35 Schatz). Genres of order, versus genres of integration, force deviance from the narrative through death or reconditioning. The monster in the film must repent or die. Since this genre is known for its use of violence, often the answer is simply death. Therefore, this genre works effectively to scare its viewers into

conformity. The audience members, who often identify with the protagonist, understand that they must follow the film's doctrine or risk elimination also.

Post-modern Horror Film

According to Isabel Cristina Pinedo, in Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing, post-modern horror films embody five main characteristics: a disruption of the everyday world, the violation of boundaries, a nihilistic and irrational view of the world, lack of closure and a bounded experience of fear (17). Modern horror films share some of these characteristics, but not in the same way. This paper also argues that post-modern film even before, but particularly after 9/11, display some differences from Pinedo's definition. To highlight the differences between time periods, due to changing ideology, let's look at Pinedo's characteristics individually.

First, horror films have always emphasized the disruption of the everyday world. Classic horror films, such as Frankenstein (1931), show a very organized world that is terrorized by a deviant force. This force may be representative of many issues in society. In a film like Frankenstein, some of the issues embodied in the monster are the use of science, which may not always be for the good of man. There is also a fear of lost innocence, such as when the monster accidentally kills a young child. Lastly is the fear of the disintegrating family. The scientist is more worried about his experiment than marrying Elizabeth. Therefore the film uses the monster's disruption of the everyday world to confront and deal with these issues. Post-modern films also employ an outside, deviant force to highlight issues that harm society. A film like Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) incorporates a sexually deviant man, Freddy Kruger, to eliminate teenage sex. The film portrays our preoccupation with this issue. Films post 9/11 confront problems our society now faces, such as fear of future attacks, biological warfare, American treatment

abroad, and the security of our homes. However these films, unlike most horror film, do not characterize the monster as a disturbance, but instead as a reality in the world of the film.

Second, the horror film's goal is to identify the violation of boundaries and to attempt to bring the disrupted society back to normality. Therefore the monster is often coded with characteristics that violate the boundaries considered right. Monsters, like Frankenstein's creation and Freddy Kruger, transgress the boundary of life and death. The monster's body in Frankenstein is made from the parts of dead men and Freddy Kruger is burnt to death, yet reappears in the dreams of misbehaving teenagers to murder them. Post 9/11 films deal with the transgression of many boundaries, some of which include societal law, life/death, and innocence/evil. Before 9/11 our society stabilized itself by maintaining these boundaries and reinforcing these boundaries in film. However post 9/11 film does not portray these boundaries, but highlights the very lack of boundaries.

Modern film also seeks to reinforce cultural boundaries through the destruction of the monster and the reestablishing of the societal norms. Horror films are meant to educate their audiences on socially correct ideologies. Therefore these films use a very simplistic approach: code the good characters with the endorsed values of society and code the bad characters with deviant actions and values. Furthermore, to assure the audience of the correct ideology, these films kill off all the deviant characters in the film. Therefore horror films portray the simplest form of ideological reinforcement by playing upon our natural need to remain alive.

Third, contemporary film or what this paper refers to as post 9/11 film depicts an irrational world which may point to our rational world's inability to deal with the issues

at hand. In Frankenstein the monster is destroyed and the townspeople can return to their previous lives. Post-modern films do not function the same way. These films are often unsuccessful at purging the society of this disturbance. In Nightmare on Elm Street Freddy Kruger cannot be defeated by rational means of life and death. The film continually moves from conscious reality to the unconscious, often blurring the two states. Post 9/11 film shows the irrational to be rational in the world of the film. Terrorism is not an issue easily eliminated in our society. The terror Americans feel cannot be simply remedied with the capture of Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein. It is an elusive issue, which may possibly only be watched, but never eliminated. Moreover, these films do not follow the obvious coding past horror films have employed to indicate who will survive. Modes of survival are more ambiguous and sometimes do not exist at all in the post 9/11 horror film. Contemporary films portray our society dealing with the unknown means of survival or how to avoid the harmful affects of terrorism and therefore our terror is never relieved with a conclusion in life or the film.

Fourth, post-modern films, unlike modern films, “repudiate narrative closure” (29 Pinedo). Freddy always seems to come back; Jason returns in numerous sequels to terrorize a teenage camp; there is not just a Scream, but also a Scream II and a Scream III. Although a trilogy (if not more sequels) seems to be an industry standard, the viewers’ interests in reliving essentially the same story line in numerous films indicates the post-modern films’ inability to solve the film’s issues. Post 9/11 film also refuses closure, but the overall mood of the film has further differences. In many post-modern films a pretense of finality is often provided. One thinks Freddy might be destroyed, Jason is sent back to hell and cannot terrorize the camp, and the killers are identified in Scream. In contrast, post 9/11 films do not make a pretense of closure. The dread is never

given a finality or hope of finality, unlike other post-modern films. The films state that there is no true solution for the terror.

Finally, Pinedo argues that post-modern film creates a bound experience, which causes viewers to follow along with the terror, becoming active members through their own fear. This paper would argue that all horror films try to create this bond with the viewer, which is usually filtered through our link to the protagonist. Yet, departing from Pinedo's argument slightly, this paper would argue that post 9/11 film creates this bond somewhat differently than modern or other post-modern films. The bond of fear in films before 9/11 is often broken to allow for comic relief. In other words, something funny or ordinary happens to allow the viewer to regain composure and not remain in a constant state of fear. Post 9/11 films do not incorporate comic relief. Instead, the films encourage the viewer to be constantly afraid throughout. In a film like Hostel (2005) the viewer understands that the American college kids are slowly being drugged, captured and killed. Therefore the viewer cannot participate in lighter scenes when partying and fun seem to be the motivations of the characters. Instead the viewer constantly fears for the character as if for oneself.

Viewer experience is a difficult thing to prove, but also a significant reason why viewers continue to return to the genre. All horror film, even all film, seeks to create identification. Horror films seek to create fear in the viewer. This fear is then tied to the issues the film seeks to highlight and the correct ideology is often scared into viewer, and thus reinforced. One cannot fully prove this occurrence without monitoring viewers watching a horror film, but one can map the way a narrative tries to create this feeling and cause identification. Therefore Hostel, which will be explored more fully later in the paper, creates this fear by allowing the viewer to know more than the characters. The

viewer thus understands the fate of the main characters and constantly struggles against this ending. A few more distinctions can be made between post-modern and post 9/11 films that Pinedo's definition does not cover.

In Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Post-modern Horror Film, Tony Magistrale describes the monstrous as progressively moving closer to our society (XV). He demonstrates this theory by mapping vampire films throughout history. The vampire originally developed as an "alien species" that invades our normal society, like Dracula. However, over time the vampire's roots moved closer to our everyday homes, such as in Blade (1998) or Interview with the Vampire (1994). This movement highlights a major distinction between modern and post-modern horror film; post-modern now confronts the monstrosity in our own backyard. The events of September 11th push this theory even further, as Americans worry about terrorist attacks upon our previously safe communities. Post-modern films have portrayed our society's fearfulness of deviancy in our own home, yet post 9/11 film portrays our society's inability to ever know true security again.

One of the most important differences between post-modern horror films and post 9/11 films is the use of dread. Therefore let's refine the difference between art-horror and art-dread.

Art-Horror versus Art-Dread

Noel Carroll first introduced the difference between art-horror and art-dread in his essay "The Philosophy of Horror" (1989). Carroll states that horror is defined solely by the monster, which creates an emotional response from the viewer, usually disgust (139). These films make a point to display the monster and show the viewer ways, sometime ineffective ways, to defeat the monster. Jason, although a demon, is portrayed as a

concrete or embodied monster. He is fought off in many ways: stabbed, shot, hung, and even set on fire. However art-dread is much different. The monster is vague and is portrayed as “evil disembodied” (141 Hills). A monster cannot be effectively destroyed when its presence is often not visualized or embodied in one entity. Often the anxiety is “nameless and objectless” (30 Cowie). Therefore the protagonist of art-dread feels helpless when encountering an undetectable, unrecognizable and uncontrollable monster.

In post-modern film the difference between art-horror and art-dread becomes vital when considering the preoccupations that characterize a given film. The problems post-modern films confront are not as easily remedied as many modern horror films. The nature of the problem’s resolution is not as cut and dry. Issues like teenage sex and the dysfunctional family seem more concrete than a fear which cannot be fully identified. Post 9/11 films deal with such a fear. Terrorism and the possible threat of a terrorist attack cannot be fully encompassed in a monster. The threat is unknown; although profiling is often used to single out a threat, it is not very accurate. Even the modes of terror cannot be fully identified: a threat can materialize in a plane, a powdery substance in an envelope or possibly in the drinking water. Furthermore the terror is uncontrollable. Identifying and dealing with one instance of terror does not remedy the entire threat. Post 9/11 confronts the inability to deal with terror through the use of dread. This type of dread paired with the American’s heightened awareness of the homeland, in films such as The Village and The Grudge, is difficult not to read in light of September 11th.

Post 9/11 Film

Given the background and some characteristics of past horror films one can discuss the major departures of post 9/11 horror films. One can then map the way these changes relate to the significant events of 9/11.

-Post 9/11 films abandon the concept of a normal world

Isabel Cristina Pinedo discusses the post-modern films' "violent disruption of the everyday world" (17). Most horror films begin by showing a normal society and then portraying the factors which corrupt the communities' perfect existence. In Nightmare on Elm Street a normal society is corrupted by the sexual deviance and murders of Fred Kruger. Freddy is eliminated from the society and the society returns to normal until teenage sexual deviance allows him passage back into the world. Although Freddy is never entirely killed, the hope of return to a normal existence is the motivation in the film. We can identify the cause of the disturbance and rid our society of the disturbance through the genre's classic solution: reformation or elimination. So even the post-modern horror film maintains its fidelity to reinforcing correct ideology and returning to a sense of normalcy.

The post 9/11 film abandons all concept of a normal world. These films begin by showing us the world of the film, which is unchanging and unredeemable. Essentially there is no disruption of the everyday world, because the film is revealing the gruesome nature of the everyday world and debunking our belief in any other society. Films like Eli Roth's Cabin Fever (2006) and Hostel portray these characterizations quite well. However, this is a growing trend in many post 9/11 films like Wrong Turn (2003), Saw (2004), The Grudge (2005), Amityville Horror (2005), An American Haunting (2005), Saw II (2005) and The Hills Have Eyes (2006). All these films depart from the usual post-modern narrative by stressing a nihilistic world as the normality. Therefore a normal society is never disrupted or returned to in the conclusion of the film. This changes the concept of horror films, since reformation is not reinforced through corrective ideology.

Instead the ideology of the film represents the fear our society is being consumed by in our terror culture and provides little room for solution.

-Post 9/11 films do not establish horror through the disruption of boundaries, but through the very lack of any boundaries.

Traditional horror films seek to reinforce ideology through scare tactics. This concept depends upon our understanding of the rules of the genre. A very general rule most horror films follow is that the good live and the bad die. Genre films are then able to exploit this coding by linking the correct actions and deviant actions with consequences. Thus in Nightmare on Elm Street the virgins live and those who are sexually active die. Reinforcing ideology depends on the ability of the film to establish boundaries.

Post 9/11 film does not function the same way since they do not obey the idea of boundaries. The good, innocent, bad, young and old alike all die in the films. No one set of characteristics code a character for survival. This concept represents the lack of boundaries involved in the violence of terrorism. There are no boundaries to this terror and essentially no way to code who lives and who dies. Therefore the genre responds by portraying this lack of boundaries within new narratives.

-Post 9/11 films are more concerned with portraying dread than the traditional concept of horror.

In most horror films the terror is embodied, identified and then eliminated. Post-modern films departed widely from modern films in their willingness to question the closure of terror. The monsters of these films once embodied and identified were not always successfully killed at the films' conclusion. A hint of suspicion seemed to always remain for their return. Yet the films made pretences of closure and the entire narrative revolved around eliminating this terror in hopes of reassuming the previous normal

society. The feature of post 9/11 film that distinguishes it from modern and post-modern is that often the horror is not even embodied, not identified and therefore not eliminated. Thus post 9/11 film is not about the revelation of horror and suppression of horror, but the continuation of dread. The films enact dread because unlike horror, the films have no intention of ever remedying the fear. Since the events of September 11th our society has learned to deal with a constant state of fear or dread. The films after this event portray our inability to dismiss or conquer our fears. Today's ideology of fear suggests we should feel this way and so do our films.

-Post 9/11 films do not question rationale, but establish the irrational and the nihilistic as the governing mindset of society.

Horror films are known for their production of irrationality in the rationale world. Figures like Jason (a demon from hell), Chucky (a possessed doll), and Freddy (an undead killer) are irrational figures that make appearances in our rational, everyday world. This is why their presence is a violation of the boundaries of society. Post 9/11 films do not know these boundaries or a rationale society. The society of the film and their gruesome actions are the film's reality. The films treat the horror as not only of rationale, but as everyday normalcy that is being revealed to the naïve viewer. The treatment of terrorism in our society is very similar. Our country seemed to think that terrorism existed in the irrational world of the Middle East or in third world countries. We never realized, until September 11th, that terrorism is a reality of our world, society and homeland. Post 9/11 films do not seek to recover this realization that our world is not normal or safe. The murderous actions, gore and destruction are rational in the films and in reality.

-Post 9/11 films make no attempt at closure.

In the post-modern horror film a real precedence towards questioning closure was established. The problems the film addresses are not solved and therefore why should the narrative come to closure? The monster is bound to return if the society is still dealing with the issues the monster is meant to represent. Thus, these films often have somewhat open endings, suggesting a sequel. The main difference is that most post-modern film, in contrast to post 9/11 film, seems to try to establish the idea of closure and a resumed normality. Post 9/11 films know that the dread will not end and therefore closure is not possible. These films reject our need for a wrapped up ending and a good feeling at the end. The monster or the dread lives on and more people are bound to be affected. The events of 9/11 and terrorism are the same. There is no conclusion and no solution to the fear. It does not matter how many supposed terrorists we capture or countries we go to war with. The fact of the matter is that terrorism is a concept that cannot be embodied or solved. Thus our dread is not abandoned, but our dread can be faced – as demonstrated in M. Night Shyamalan's The Village.

-Post 9/11 films offer very little comic relief or visual relief and are quite bleak.

Past horror films have attempted to segment our fear by creating moments of comedy. Comic relief provides the view with a mental break from the fear the film attempts to establish. Since post 9/11 films want to make viewers feel dread, they do not focus on methods for comic relief. These films seek to establish the reality of the cinematic world from the beginning of the film. Distracting or deviating from this reality alters the message these films communicate: that our society is blind to the true nature of the world. The Grudge is a good example of this. The film begins and ends with death; the terror is not lightened or relieved throughout the film.

Since post 9/11 films focus on portraying the nihilistic nature of society the narrative must not generate hope that a normal society can exist, even visually. Not only is comic relief not part of these films, but the bleakness of the film's perspective is reinforced through dark and fearful mise-en-scenes. Films before 9/11 also used low-lighting and were often set at night, but post 9/11 films seem to employ this bleakness more consistently. Hostel, for example, is primarily set in dark clubs, hostels, abandoned warehouses and torture rooms. Even in the daylight, the film reveals still more bleak characterizations within the narrative, such as the Bubble Gum Gang's murdering of the thugs sent to capture the protagonist, Paxton. Again, the focus upon bleakness without a great deal of visual relief is another way to reinforce the unchanging terror of the world of the film. Since September 11th our society seeks to reinforce the fear of terrorism through government legislation, the media and everyday routines made normal by our newfound world of fear (such as airport security). The ideology our current society seeks to express is fear, so why should the films of our age be any different?

-Post 9/11 films do not attempt to fully connect or identify with the characters and are unemotional.

In general horror films have not been known for their highly sympathetic and revolutionary characterization. A few exceptions might be Clarice in Silence of the Lamb (1991) or Louis in Interview with the Vampire. Most horror films, however, have stereotypical characterizations such as the final girl (a female character who survives the narrative's mass killings), the sexually deviant couple, a cowardly or geeky friend and the jock or tough guy. The development or the depth of these characters is not well defined because we are not meant to fully identify with these characters. The narrative encourages some identification, but only enough for viewers to align themselves as

victims in the narrative also. The film creates fear by allowing the viewers to view or visualize themselves as protagonists within the films. Yet the films do not allow the viewers to bond too deeply with the characters, since most likely they will die in the narrative. Thus, the film must remain somewhat unemotional about the characters in order to focus on viewers' self-preservation. Viewers abandon the characters in their moment of destruction so as to avoid metaphorical destruction within the film. Thus film causes terror, but allows one to detach from the character experiencing the terror.

Post 9/11 films also employ little identification with the characters by never letting the audience get close to the characters at all. Post-modern films, like Nightmare on Elm Street or Child's Play, allow some identification to take place between the final girl or a child within the narrative. We sympathize and align ourselves with the outcome of these characters. Post 9/11 films do not attempt to create this kind of bond, so that the destruction of everyone in the narrative does not come as a surprise. These films do not encourage any emotional attachment, but create situations and narratives that sometimes discourage attachment or alienate viewers from the characters.

Given some of these characteristics, let's look at some of the ways post 9/11 films are dealing with current cultural anxieties and further, how these films' anxieties can be linked to new concepts about fear in our culture of terror.

Cabin Fever (2003, Eli Roth)

The debut film of director Eli Roth relates a very disturbing story of a spreading disease traveling through the water system in a small town. The film portrays a group of teenagers vacationing in the woods that one by one become contaminated and die. In reaction to 9/11 this film plays on one of our society's biggest fears, biological warfare. Although very liberal in its portrayal of gore and blood, the film spins this horrific

storyline in a much more carefree manner than Roth's next major film, Hostel. The film ends on a playful note, which makes the contamination of the town and pending contamination of the rest of the world (through a reservoir water tank) very disturbing. Such a film seems to suggest that Americans are unaware of our danger in today's terror society and that we counter our present danger very ineffectively.

The film attempts to open our eyes to danger from the very first introductory shots. Although the sound of bird's chirping can be heard, the camera portrays a screen progressively filling with blood. Similar to his movie Hostel, Roth begins the film by revealing the disturbing nature of the world of the film. Unlike modern and pre-September 11th films, this narrative makes no pretence of a safe and healthy world. It begins by quickly portraying the unsafe world the film seeks to reveal and further mimics the idea of a normal world by including the bird chirping, which one might associate with a happy or safe world. "The disruption of the everyday world" does not occur the way Isabel Pinedo outlines in most post-modern film since post-9/11 film seeks to dismiss the idea of a normal everyday world.

After this ominous opening viewers are skeptical of the surrounding world. The film then presents the viewer with death. A man returns with a dead rabbit only to find his dog dead. Upon exploring the dead animal the man is sprayed with the blood of the animal, which begins the initial contamination and disease. No particular reason or source is given for the contamination. The disease establishes itself as a pathogen of the blood, but is later carried through the water system when the water is contaminated by a corpse. Therefore the horror, the disease and its effects (bloody sores, decay and madness), is disembodied and vague. Without a known source, the only way the disease can be dealt with is through elimination of those who have the disease in the hopes of eliminating the

threat. Our main characters, a group of teenagers, use this method of dealing with the contaminated man who comes to their cottage in search of help. He is turned away and set on fire when he will not leave. However, when this burning, contaminated man jumps into the water supply the problems of the film grow worse.

This cruel way of thinking and dealing with a threat has a connection to 9/11. Terrorism is also a disease that cannot be linked to just one person or entity. However, the destruction and reality is present in our society. In order to combat this evil similar methods are employed in our society as demonstrated in the film. Those believed to be a threat are captured, tortured and eliminated. These events take place both in quite a business or rationalized manner. Thus the film demonstrates, through the murder of those plagued by the disease, the brutal actions our society is willing to take in pursuit of safety. The film reveals two major departures from most-postmodern film and two important characteristics of post-9/11 film through this disembodied threat and the harsh solution for defeating the threat.

Horror film generally creates fear through the transgression of boundaries, but the frightening issue with post 9/11 film is the lack of boundaries. There can hardly be a boundary between good and evil in the nihilistic viewpoint these films employ. Thus the common horror rationalization, whereby the bad die and the good live, cannot be enacted within the film. The film seems to suggest that the world is a terrible place and the only hope is that one eludes the source of terror. In Cabin Fever the cause of the threat is never identified. It seems as if the disease had always been present, but the characters were unaware of it. No boundaries are ever established to transgress. The film only reveals the reality of the world of the film and attempts to overcome viewers' naivety. This viewpoint is a major development in the genre. Since no normal society exists to interrupt

and evil is always present, how is the threat conquered? The answer post 9/11 films provide is that it will never be conquered.

These horror films also include dread. In Cabin Fever no conclusion is ever offered. However, the contamination through a kid's lemonade stand and through the bottling of the town's water suggests a continuation. Thus, the dread of more pending death continues. Normal horror has been and can be defeated, but dread is always present and unchanging. Moreover, our attempt to reestablish boundaries or end the dread only violates more boundaries, like the sanctity of human rights and life. The film seems to say that the monster cannot be defeated because it lives in each person and through their desperate actions to survive. This film speaks to our response to terrorism and our actions when under attack. The dread does not end, but becomes a regular part of our society. Our actions become more desperate and horrifying in our attempt to mandate our presumed boundaries.

Many other changes in the genre result from the lack of boundaries. The genre has in the past been known for helping to recondition society by coding the traits of good and evil. There seems to be no good or evil in these films, but a Darwinian need for survival. A return to a normal society is impossible. The film also does not establish a normal society beforehand. The innocent, the evil and anyone in the path of destruction die. Post 9/11 films do not serve the same function horror has traditionally served. The genre generally deals with the problems of our society and reinforces the correct ideology with the gift of survival. In post 9/11 films, no clear rules are outlined to suggest the means of survival. The film's only true goal is to show the lack of boundaries enacted by the disease. Instead of helping the viewer deal with their fear of 9/11 the film seems to support the fear and provide little conclusion or solution.

Identification with the characters is somewhat difficult and a return to a normal society impossible. The film seems to distance itself from the characters as a means of emphasizing the viewer's need for survival, which consists of being unsympathetic and focusing only on one's personal needs. Cabin Fever portrays this idea through its limited use of the point of view shots and by avoiding any true character development. The narrative does not make a great deal of effort to establish relationships. The only relationship commented on in the film is that between Karen and Paul. The film reveals Paul's unspoken love for Karen and even flirts with the idea of them coupling through a romantic kiss. The film soon abandons this possibility of a developing relationship when Karen is the first to be contaminated. Paul realizes she has the disease in a sexual encounter and is horrified when he is covered with Karen's blood. Furthermore the concept of a romance is ended when the other teenagers (including Paul) stick Karen in a shed to keep her disease away from them. Thus the film breaks any identification with love or relationships, but portrays the characters isolating themselves from each other.

As the film continues the body count gets higher and the film takes on an almost comic tone. Unlike Hostel, Roth seems to make a joke or parody the increasing gruesomeness of the film. Blood is projected in very unrealistic vomit scenes, a mentally handicapped boy obtains the disease through biting one of the teenagers, a group of local hillbillies come into the woods to murder the teenagers, Paul contaminates a group of underage teenagers at a drunken party, the town is portrayed as a reservoir for a bottled water company and most ironically of all, two children have a lemonade stand with contaminated water. This comic tone further distances the viewer from the destruction. It portrays the carefree stance our society has been taught to feel about the routine violence our society uses to regulate our safety. The film's happy, small town ending shows that

no town (however seemingly innocent) is exempt. Despite the gruesome actions of the film society goes on in a normal fashion as if nothing is wrong. The film's message seems to be stating that Americans are also behaving this way. We are willing to take horrific action against anyone suspected of terrorism, yet we go on with our day to day life as if nothing is wrong.

Although the film provides comic relief through outrageous actions, relief is really not offered. The viewer is only further disturbed by the lightheartedness with which the film approaches these atrocities. Therefore the film establishes itself as progressive from most post-modern horror film, since the main goal of the film is to disturb and not simply recondition the viewer. However, unlike Hostel, the dread is not as visually intense because of the attempt to make the gruesome comic. Still the film attempts to take the viewer outside of their normal comfort level. The film seems to say that we don't feel enough terror in light of the actions we are taking as a country. Instead of looking outwardly, viewers should be looking inwardly at our own contamination.

Hostel (2006, Eli Roth)

Eli Roth's second major motion picture, Hostel, begins by showing the viewer exactly what he/she has to fear in the film: losing body parts. The film opens upon a man cleaning a room. While we do not see much of the man, the film depicts blood, guts and body parts being washed into the drain. This sight, combined with the cheerful whistling of the man cleaning, establishes our entrance in this disturbing world. The director makes no attempt to establish a normal society, but instead seems to abandon the idea that such a society exists. The film privileges the viewer with this opening scene's post-mutilation to teach the viewer not to invest in the safety of the world, but to fear for the protagonist and essentially to fear for ourselves. As a post 9/11 film this opening is very important,

since it establishes a division from post-modern films that attempt to assert a safe world or the potential for a safe existence. This growing shift in the genre, contrary to Pinedo's characteristic in which a normal society is established and then disrupted, should be noticed and explored more fully.

The film continues this tone by constantly reminding the viewer of the unsafe nature of the film's inhabited world. In the following scene the film introduces the viewers to our main characters: Paxton, Josh and Oli. Now with more knowledge of the world of the film than the main characters possess, it is difficult for the viewer to engage in the same enjoyment of the parties, drugs, and frivolity the characters experience. Instead the viewers only identify with the characters until their safety is in question, and then the camera abandons identification as a mode of self preservation. Once the narrative assures the death of the character the camera abandons all POV shots and any other method of identification. Due to our knowledge of world of the film, we know what should be avoided and want to scream at the characters to get them to realize their danger. The film creates this dynamic purposefully by making us aware of the danger from the beginning with privileged knowledge, so instead of spending the entire film searching for possible danger we try to avoid the danger. Instead of being in a constant state of anticipation the viewers are in a constant state of dread, anticipating the inevitable torture of the characters. Therefore the camera aligns itself with this understanding and breaks identification (abandoning POV shots) with the characters, providing the viewers' desired flight from the situation (abandoning the room the character is in). Eli Roth does not allow for this flight, but forces the gruesome nature of torture and death on screen to heighten our dread. Once we know for sure that Josh is

about to be killed, it is then that Roth finally allows the camera to break all POV shots and abandon Josh for Paxton's perspective.

Viewers do not identify with Oli as closely as we do with Paxton and Josh. However, first it must be noted that this identification is targeted at an American audience. Other nationalities may and did view this film differently, most pointedly Slovaks who are portrayed as the main culprits. Roth received a great deal of criticism relating to his choice to portray Slovaks and Slovakia as torturers (IMDB). Thus, to describe the identification one must understand the target audience for the film: naïve Americans. Since Paxton and Josh are Americans the viewer is meant to identify with them most of all. Oli's presence in the film demonstrates the willingness of our main characters to make friends with strangers. It's of no surprise when the narrative eliminates Oli first, since his broken English, irresponsibility and sexual deviance make American viewers less emotionally invested in him. Still Oli's death serves as a reminder of the nature of this world and becomes the inciting incident to make Paxton and Josh aware of this world.

The viewer's identification with Paxton and Josh develops from many reasons. First, they are Americans in a foreign country. Since the film caters to American audiences, the fear of the unknown and foreign becomes an important factor in the film. Paxton and Josh seem not to fear their foreign status, but behave the way many Americans are stereotyped to behave – as privileged individuals in an inferior country. Scenes which establish this attitude occur when Paxton and Josh get into a fight at the disco or when they fail to observe the curfew at the hostel. These two American guys seem to think that rules of conduct do not apply to them, which unfortunately creates part

of the natives' bias against Americans. Still, their characterization as American causes American audiences to understand their disorientation in this unsafe world.

The viewer also identifies with more universal qualities of both Paxton and Josh. Both guys are college students looking to make something of themselves: Josh is writing a thesis for graduation and Paxton is planning to sit for a bar exam. Clearly both characters have had the benefits of an education and will potentially prosper in the land of opportunity. This American reality makes a wonderful contrast to the Bubble Gum Gang, a group of native, misfit boys who terrorize the Slovakian town. These Bubble Gum boys are not privileged with an education and resort to violence to get their demands met. The film seems to make a statement that such an impoverished existence would encourage these boys to learn from a young age to take what they need, no matter the means. This portrayal rationalizes why some undeveloped countries, which have very little, may dislike a country that takes and has a great deal. No matter the rationalization, the film clearly positions the viewer to sympathize when Josh is almost assaulted by these boys for candy.

As viewers we also identify with the good nature of Josh and Paxton. Although the film codes Josh as somewhat weak – he is afraid to try new things, he scares easily, and he seems totally out of tune with women – the film seems to view this as reason to feel for Josh and ultimately sympathize with him. One scene that demonstrates that is when Josh forgives a man who fondled him on the train. Even after the train man trespasses upon Josh's boundaries by touching him, Josh attempts to reconcile with this man when the stranger saves him from the Bubble Gum Gang. Therefore, it comes as quite a shock when this man becomes Josh's captor and murderer. The film encourages

the viewer to feel wronged and traumatized by this revelation. Josh is coded as a good guy within the film, yet he is murdered in the most gruesome way.

Part of the reason why Josh's murder affects the viewer so much is because we feel like the victim too and are encouraged to feel this way. The point of view shots, shots which align the camera's view with that of a character's, during Josh's captivity assist in our identification. Like Josh, we are blinded and cannot see our dungeon when a black bag is over our head. The film encourages us to feel scared, by Josh's frantic hope to see through a peephole in the bag, trying to establish where we are and what is happening. The viewer also is meant to feel trapped when we see Josh in a bolted down chair. His pain is meant to be our pain. This is why the camera makes such an effort to capture dripping blood; the sound tries to represent a drill being put into Josh's flesh and his Achilles tendons being cut. The next shot in the film portrays an empty hallway, while Josh is heard screaming. Thus, he and the viewer are all alone. Finally our identification is at its height when Josh attempts to crawl to freedom. A POV shot is reassumed as Josh crawls to the door in pain. The music quickens, mimicking the quicken heartbeat of Josh and the viewer. Will he get free? When the captor's boot is stomped in front of Josh, we are stopped too. The POV ends and so does the identification of the viewer when the viewer, with Josh, watches the captor slit Josh's throat in a mirror. This scene causes the viewer to dislodge their identification with Josh as a mode of self preservation. The narrative then switches to Paxton, our only hope for survival and escape.

Part of the way our fear is created is through the lack of boundaries. There is no rationale to these killings beside the fact that Americans are targeted. Josh has done nothing wrong and so his murder does not follow normal standards for horror films: the good live and the bad die. Post 9/11 films seek to stress the unreliability of any boundary.

Our fear is created and maintained through this method. There are no boundaries against the train man touching Josh, or boundaries against this same man drilling holes into Josh's chest or moral boundaries that forbid these captors from wanting to hurt other human beings. Where Americans will be targeted also has no boundaries. It could be abroad, as in the film, or at home as 9/11 demonstrates. The fear cannot end because the dread cannot end. Boundaries cannot be reestablished and therefore how can there ever be a conclusion? The fear does not stop with Josh and there is no remedy, but the fear continues in our last character, Paxton.

Our identification with Paxton is for some of the same reasons we identify with Josh. Paxton is characterized as a good friend, a nice guy, and confident. After Josh's murder the viewer is fearful for Paxton, but relieved when it is found that he was locked in a closet. The viewers' first response is flight, yet the film does not allow for this flight. The fear continues when Paxton not only finds the girls responsible for Josh's death, but is also led to the very place of the murder. Our hope for this more confident and strong character seems to end when he is in turn captured.

Unlike Josh, Paxton survives for a few key reasons. First, Paxton is more knowledgeable than Josh as a traveler. He is more resourceful; he speaks other languages and is not afraid to take action. Paxton's ability to adapt to the needs of the environment assists him in obtaining freedom. He assumes the uniform of a torturer, a dead corpse and even a wealthy American when needed. In unknown territory this quality is the most important. The director seems to stress the importance of being aware of one's surroundings and not naïve. In a sense this makes the film somewhat progressive, since it forces Americans to view their ignorance of the world around them and the ease with which overly cocky Americans become the victim.

However this film responds to 9/11 in a more typical way, which reinforces current ideologies on fear in our country. Our society wants us to fear since 9/11 and view ourselves as the victims of terrorism. This film's nihilistic view of the world supports the idea that Americans will never be safe again. According to the film we are now hunted targets and people will pay millions of dollar to torture us. The film endorses the idea that we are the victims and every foreigner in the world is out for the destruction of Americans. In our current society this view of torture mimics our country's own stance towards the torture of possible terrorist. In a business-like manner, which we rationalize through our fight against terrorism and our need for intelligence, we routinely torture those we have deemed as possible threats. The film purposefully draws our attention to the gruesome nature of such an unemotional and nihilistic view towards human life. Unlike many postmodern films, post 9/11 films do not allow the narrative a chance to absolve this nihilistic view. There is no light at the end of Paxton's tunnel. He has survived some attacks upon his life, but others attacks may happen, if not to him then to other Americans. The organization of hate against us is not limited to just a few people, but is represented in a business-like fashion in the film. There is no real justification for the hatred of Americans, but it is just a way of life, which businessmen are able to capitalize upon and make money through via "Elite Hunting."

Thus, in accordance with other postmodern films, there is no closure. The hope of returning to a normal society where Americans are safe is not possible. However, unlike many postmodern films, the growing characteristic of post 9/11 film is that no pretense towards closure is attempted. It is true that Paxton is free and that one of the main killers is eliminated, but the killing will continue in the next Hostel due June 2007 as it will in the mindset of Americans today.

The Grudge (2004, Takashi Shimizu)

When a man jumps off his balcony, Takashi Shimizu's film The Grudge immediately positions the world of the film as unstable. A normal world is not introduced or formed at any point in the film. The Grudge, a curse born when a Japanese woman and son are brutally murdered, terrorizes everyone who walks into the home the curse inhabits. As the film continues more people become victim to the curse and the terror spreads.

The narrative never establishes boundaries of life and death which is portrayed through the use of the supernatural. These boundaries do not exist in the world of the film. In fact, like most post 9/11 film, no boundaries exist within the film. Thus, the film cannot return to a state of normalcy since the film's normalcy is the terror of the grudge. Unlike past horror films, no coding of good or bad is established and therefore the grudge kills indiscriminately. The older woman, Yoko, Doug and Karen are all innocent members taken by the grudge. Whoever walks into the house where the grudge resides is killed by the supernatural spirit.

Moreover, the grudge is not a force that can be combated or even fully identified. Within the narrative Karen discovers the story behind the grudge, but this does not save her from her presumed doom. Since this evil force cannot be stopped, the narrative loses hope and dread is further reinforced. More deaths will occur with little solution. Like 9/11, no one conclusion can be pin pointed to hinder the terror; thus the dread continues.

Although the film and the evil spirit are considered irrational or unreal, in the world of the film the grudge is rational. The spirit follows its own rules in haunting that are identifiable within the film. The individuals within the film must visit the house to believe such a story and afterward soon come to believe, but with terrible consequences.

Thus the presumably irrational exists in the rational world, even extending beyond the house as portrayed in the ending.

Since the film began without boundaries, the threat is not defeated, and new boundaries are never drawn; there cannot be closure. The dread will continue as will the grudge. Karen attempts to destroy the house unsuccessfully at the film's conclusion. Since she is rescued by paramedics and firefighters, it is assumed others will enter the house and will die next. This is similar to other post 9/11 films, which stress the inability to end the terror within our society after September 11th. Therefore it is a dread, the film posits, we have to learn to live with.

Since the dread does not end and is only heightened within the film, the narrative makes no attempt to establish comic or visual relief. The mise-en-scene of the film is very bleak, portraying graveyards, dark nights in Tokyo, and the dark home of the grudge. The film is not comic by any means, but seems to only push the storyline of Karen's understanding and eventual confrontation with the evil spirit. Therefore, unlike horror films in the past, post 9/11 film establish this inability to have relief. The terror and the fear are constant.

The setting of The Grudge, a home, is also important. As a post 9/11 film it portrays our preoccupations with the safety of our homes. Terrorism used to be an issue Americans could locate in the Middle East. However September 11th changed the way viewers understand their homeland. The same security and confidence is not present. This homeland extends to the concept of our motherland, our state, our city and our homes. Thus, the focus on atrocities set in the home and affecting the home is not arbitrary, but portrays our growing occupation with our safety in today's society.

The repetition of terror is also a concern in the film. The grudge is created by terror and continues to terrorize others that it encounters. The continuation of violence suggest a post 9/11 reading for a couple of reasons. One connection is the fear of further terrorist attacks our society propagates through the media. Our society is one of fear, which the film encompasses through the continued dread of death. Furthermore the repetitions also suggest that the terror was created, but continues in a spiral of destruction. The fear circulates throughout the narrative to everyone who encounters the grudge. Since 9/11 our country has done everything possible to ensure a terrorist attack never happens again. However, we have tried to reach this point by terrorizing, ostracizing, and discriminating against many others. The spiral of terror filtered to other people, innocent people, and continues onward. The terror in our society affects everyone in the society through new laws, regulations, and security measures.

Although this film does culturally reinforce feelings of terror this film offers a glimpse of progressiveness. It is not enough for a film to simply create terror and represent our society's ideology of fear, but films (progressive films) should examine this terror to map the true cause, which may help lead to a solution or at least a way of monitoring our fear. The Grudge shows the viewer that the cause of the fear is created through a heinous act of murder. This one act causes a great deal of repercussions when this murder changes the household forever, making it a house of death or the house of the grudge. The film causes one to question of origin and continuation of the grudge. If one turns this same line of questioning toward the terror Americans feel today one can see how the film and the events of 9/11 relate. The destruction and deaths that took place at the twin towers was only one heinous act that spread to multiple repercussions. It seems as if this grudge our society holds against any easy scapegoat will never cease. The

destruction and fear then continues, because we can never disband our dread and come to some conclusion about our state of terror.

The Village (2004, M. Night Shyamalan)

M. Night Shyamalan focuses on providing a narrative that does more than just create fear. This progressive film also seeks to show the creation of the fear (the cause) and the reasons behind terror. Thus, as a post 9/11 film, The Village portrays current society's use of fear and how to mitigate this fear with greater amounts of rationale and acceptance.

The film begins by portraying a small town gathered at a funeral for a young boy. Thus immediately the film triggers a wary tone, since the dying of youth is not in keeping with our societal goals; it breaches the boundaries of youth equaling life and only dying old. Death is actually very important in the film, since it functions as reasoning for much of the narrative. How to avoid death? Also, it portrays how a murderous death can strip man of his innocence. The village actually is created based on the premise of reassuming innocence, which means returning to days of simplicity. Every elder has secretly lost a person of importance due to murder. Therefore the town is established away from normal society and protected by a lie, a monstrous beast that guards the forest line. This mode of living seems to work well, until the very thing they wished to avoid – the violent tendencies of man – returns to haunt them.

The director, M. Night Shyamalan, creates the environment for such a society. The elders decide to form a village in keeping with America's Puritanical roots, which are portrayed within the film through cabin housing, gender specific and conservative clothing, a farm and livestock livelihood, and traditional ideology in regards to marriage, family and gender roles. Shyamalan initially allows the viewer to emotionally invest in

this life. It seems peaceful, morally right and innocent. Yet small hints are provided along the way to show that not all is what it seems. The death of youth, black boxes containing secrets in every home, and lies pervade this innocence. This opening is very important since the director wants the viewer to invest in this innocence so that he can portray its falsity. This is very similar to the innocence with which today's Americans once viewed their motherland. Even comments of returning to "the good old days" keep Americans disillusioned with an idyllic myth of our innocent and perfect past. After the events of 9/11 many felt that our society has lost its innocence. How can we continue to tell our children that our homeland is safe? If we launch a pre-emptive strike can we continue to consider ourselves innocent or victims? Shyamalan's goal is to portray the importance of perspective. It's easy to consider history or an event from one perspective, but when one casts aside one's naiveté and one learns of the multiple factors that serve as stimuli for many events in our historical past it's hard to look at the previous history the same way. Shyamalan allows the viewer to believe in the perfect town, because he understands the mindset with which many Americans viewed their own existence. His film seeks to show this perspective as dangerous and limiting.

Just as the director teaches us to believe in the innocence of the town, he also plays on our notion of authority. The story quickly aligns itself with two main characters, Lucius and Ivy. When Lucius begins to ask to travel through the forest and into town, the viewers are initially fearful. Ivy represents our response by stating that Lucius' mission is "noble, but it is not right." The film positions the viewer as a supporter, who seeks to maintain the innocence of the village. The elders say that breaching the woods will harm the town and break the oath made with the beast, so Lucius' requests seem a bit selfish. Society's ideologies have conditioned the townspeople and the viewers to obey the

government. The film then posits that Lucius give up these foolish ideas, by incorporating another significant ideology, marriage and family. Lucius gives up his mission when his breach of the forest causes the monsters to disrupt the village. Due to his curiosity it seems as if the monsters will attack the village. Lucius is very fearful of causing harm to others, especially Ivy. Therefore he abandons thoughts of disobeying the elders and invests in protecting Ivy. This change in events suggests that the family is the best reason for our compliance in our society. After the events of 9/11 many civil liberties were restricted in the name of safety. Similar to the townspeople, our citizens were willing to give up their rights in exchange for their family's safety. The film seems to suggest that men like Lucius, who question the rules, learn to obey because of their duty to their family. Domesticity and the need for safety becomes the key to controlling the masses, as illustrated in the village.

When Lucius decides to marry Ivy all seems well. The viewer and Lucius have now invested themselves into the town's innocence and stability. However this innocence is disrupted, as in most post-modern films, when the evil of man destroys it. Noah, a mentally handicapped boy from the town, stabs Lucius in jealousy over his betrothal with Ivy. Murder, the very reason the elders relocated in the towns, infiltrates the innocence. The elders are put in a dilemma: should they or should they not let someone go to the outside world to get medicine to help Lucius? Without the medicine he will surely die, but to get the medicine means possibly compromising the town's reality. This question becomes very difficult, since to not get the medicine means undoubtedly compromising innocence by not doing more to save Lucius' life. Yet allowing someone to get the medicine could ruin their whole existence.

Shyamalan seeks to take the blinders off of the viewers regarding not just the town, but our society too. Although our society may see itself as the innocent victims in a terrorist act, the film causes one to question our role in the turn of events. Are we really innocent when we provide artillery to other countries? Can we consider ourselves innocent when we outsource our labor to other markets so that we might have cheaper clothing, coffee and toys? Could there possibly be more to the story than our government and the media wish to highlight for the American people? The Village seeks to get viewers to question the presumed innocence and fear we are indoctrinated with everyday.

The village represents well Plato's concept of the cave. The villagers are individuals in a cave. This cave seems well intentioned, because it is used to maintain innocence or a seemingly correct way of living (in essence an ideology). The naïve cave dwellers (the villagers) do not question the rules of the cave and are fearful of the shadows from the outside, essentially the evil world. Yet the meanings of the shadows are open to interpretation. The villagers do not realize this since they have been indoctrinated in one viewpoint that has become their reality. To leave the cave has been equalized with certain death. Thus the villagers will continue their way of life.

The film does not follow the characteristics of many post 9/11 films, including the previous three outlined in this paper: it does questions today's rationale or fearful nature, the film provides closure and also therefore relief from dread. In contrast to many 9/11 films, the film does attempt to establish a normal concept of the world. Although the innocence of the town is proven false, the hope – upon retrieving the medicine – is for the previous normality to return to the village. M. Night Shyamalan confronts the naiveté of the town, but does not force the entire town into reality. The director is more concerned that the film takes the viewer on a journey from naiveté to an awakening of the real world

around them. He aligns the viewer with Ivy, so that we the blind (the viewers) may have an awakening of the world around us. The creation of fear and the ability for the village members to manipulate the town due to their fears is the pin point of analysis within this film, which truly makes this film progressive.

Boundaries are also set throughout the film. When these boundaries are broken bad events happen, like the monsters coming into the village. However, when we learn the monsters are just a creation one can see how the film is responding to our society's current need of boundaries to insure our freedom. The film asks the viewers if they want a false understanding or if they would rather understand the reality.

Another difference is that dread is not maintained throughout the film. Although fear is used wonderfully within the film to guide the viewer with the townspeople and align both their interests, it is disbanded in the film's conclusion when we learn that the village is actually set in a modern day plant reserve. Thus the viewer is meant to feel somewhat silly for believing in the fear in the first place.

This film also does not support the rationality or the nihilism that many post 9/11 films employ. This film actually reveals our irrationality and that of the townspeople in believing in the mythic forest monsters. The rationality of the world is emphasized at the film's conclusion, but not in a nihilist manner. The outsider and guard of the reserve, Kevin, actually seeks to help Ivy and not hurt her as previously feared by the village elders. The narrative seems to suggest that the world is not such a terrible place. Terrible things take place, but hope can always be found.

Lastly the film does make an attempt at closure. Ivy returns to the town to bring Lucius medicine. The fate of the town is understood to be in the next generation, but in reality the ideal of the town has been compromised. The town may or may not survive in

the same manner, but at least its innocence has been redeemed by sending Ivy for the medicine. The death of Noah is tragic, but is used to represent a classic horror adherence to let the good live and make the bad die. The film seems to say that good and bad happen, but it is how we deal with it that matters.

As a progressive film, The Village does not support a reinforcement of ideology. Many horror films are simply narratives used to convey familiar norms. Shyamalan uses the narrative to build our trust in the town and its ideologies, only to prove it false in the end. When Ivy reaches the road outside of the village and viewers realize the town is only on a wildlife preserve one feels tricked. The purpose of the film is to show how most people only think within the preservation when there is so much more outside of its confines that is not necessarily bad. These are decisions we must make for ourselves.

Conclusions

The horror genre has gone through many changes since its beginning. These changes will continue as long as the genre responds to the culture it represents. The problems and preoccupations of the culture will show up and be confronted in horror films. Thus, this important cultural medium gives scholars an opportunity to really investigate the ideologies that dominate our society. It is only through the understanding of the reinforcement of these ideologies that one can see their intended effect on the viewer. Progressive films also help viewers understand the indoctrination of ideology and attempt to present the viewer with an alternative and more aware way of judging the world around them.

Given this understanding of genre films' cultural relevance, it is of no surprise that films after September 11th would portray the concerns that have surfaced in light of this tragic event. The understanding of our society was put in question when the twin

towers crumbled. Our society could no longer view good and evil, right and wrong, safety or reality in the same manner. Our society only battles this problem by telling people to fear. However, the fear is disembodied and uncontrollable. We cannot pin down every terrorist in the entire world. As much as we try to profile, Americans cannot fully stop terrorist attacks from occurring. Thus our horror films depict this reality in the disembodied and uncontrollable nature of the monstrous. However, employing this concept of the monstrous and terror is ineffective, as progressive post 9/11 films highlight. Constant fear and profiling only hurts other innocent people and makes our problem worse. The best method for dealing with terror is to look at it case by case. Not all people are bad and the world is not a nihilistic place. As The Village demonstrates, there is an understanding of the world around us that viewers can reach if they seek to truly understand.

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(574) 904-2615

mandviusb@yahoo.com

Education: Indiana University, South Bend, IN
M.A. in English, August 2007
Indiana University, South Bend, IN
B.A. in English, honors, August 2007

Master's Thesis: "Living in Terror: Post 9/11 Horror Films"
Committee: Elaine Roth, Ph.D. (director, film studies), Sharon Zischewski, Ph.D. (film studies) and Margaret Scanlan, Ph.D. (English)

Honor's Thesis: "Criminalizing Homosexuality"
Committee: Elaine Roth, Ph.D. (director, film studies), Karen Gindele, Ph.D. (English), Betsy Lucal, Ph.D. (Sociology), Brenda Knowles, Ph.D. (Honor's director) and Julie Elliott (Library Sciences)

Awards: Second Place Wolfson Literary Award in Drama, Indiana University South Bend, 2007.

Graduate Courses: English Department, Indiana University South Bend
Studies in American Literature to 1900, Studies in Victorian Literature, Professional Scholarship in Literature, Literary Study and Theory, Topics in Comparative Literature Studies, Context for Study of Writing, Individual Readings in English, and Directed Writing Project

Other Professional Experience: Service Representative III, 1st Source Bank, South Bend, IN, 2002-present.

References: Elaine Roth, Ph.D. Karen Kowalczyk
English Department Airport Banking Center
Indiana University South Bend 1st Source Bank
(574) 520-4224 (574) 225-2637

Joseph Chancy, Ph.D.
English Department
Indiana University South Bend
(574) 520-4370